| **DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION** | **Number:** 1073-002 |
|---|---|
| **SUBJECT**: USDA Policy for Agroforestry | **DATE:** February 26, 2013 |
| | **OPI:** Office of Secretary |

## 1. PURPOSE

This regulation sets forth the policy of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on agroforestry based on the *USDA Agroforestry Strategic Framework, Fiscal Year 2011-2016* (approved by Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack, May 2011), hereinafter referred to as the "*Framework*".

## 2. BACKGROUND

Agroforestry is the intentional mixing of trees and shrubs into crop and animal production systems to create environmental, economic, and social benefits. It is a unique land management approach that provides opportunities to integrate productivity and profitability with environmental stewardship, resulting in healthy and sustainable agricultural systems. The *Framework* was developed by an interagency agroforestry team (IAT), with input from a broad diversity of stakeholders, in recognition of the societal contributions of agroforestry, and the need to coordinate USDA efforts to maximize public benefits. The members of the IAT represented five USDA agencies (Agricultural Research Service, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Natural Resources Conservation Service) and two key partners (National Association of Conservation Districts and National Association of State Foresters). The *Framework* was officially released by USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan on June 6, 2011, at the 12th North American Agroforestry Conference in Athens, Georgia.

In order to provide knowledge, tools, and assistance in combining agriculture and forestry for the benefit of the landowner, the community, and the Nation, the *Framework* identifies three goals:

a.  Increase use of agroforestry by landowners and communities;

b.  Advance the understanding of, and tools for, applying agroforestry; and

c.  Incorporate agroforestry into an all-lands approach to conservation and economic development.

The Agroforestry Executive Steering Committee, hereinafter referred to as the "Committee", was established in October 2011 to guide and facilitate the resources needed within USDA to implement the *Framework*. The Committee's members are senior executives representing six USDA agencies (Agricultural Marketing Service, Agricultural Research Service, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Natural Resources Conservation Service) and the Rural Development (RD) mission area. The Committee is supported by an expanded IAT, comprised of program directors and managers from each of the six agencies and RD and provides program and policy analysis for the Committee.

3. **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

This policy is effective immediately and will remain in effect through September 30, 2016. Prior delegations of authority, administrative regulations, and other directives not inconsistent with the provisions of this memorandum shall remain in full force and effect.

4. **USDA POLICY FOR ADOPTION OF AGROFORESTRY**

**To increase the use of agroforestry by landowners and communities, USDA will:**

a. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS – Expand learning partnerships with stakeholders, with a priority on Tribes and underserved and minority audiences, by taking action on these strategies:

   (1) Create learning networks and "communities of practice" comprised of practitioners and technical advisors;

   (2) Strategically locate, establish, and maintain agroforestry demonstration sites;

   (3) Utilize the concepts of "on-farm" and "action research" to connect practitioners, scientists, and technical advisors;

   (4) Support the creation of peer-to-peer learning networks; and

   (5) Develop the full range of learning opportunities, ranging from tried and proven approaches (e.g., publications, field days, and workshops) to technological innovations (e.g., electronic or e-learning)

b. EDUCATE PROFESSIONALS – Enable natural resource professionals to provide technical, educational, financial, and marketing assistance, by taking action on these strategies:

   (1) Examine the feasibility of developing an agroforestry competency for adoption by universities to offer a major, certificate, or area of expertise in agroforestry;

(2) Develop a professional recognition mechanism to acknowledge professionals who have participated in and completed a common set of agroforestry training requirements;

(3) Provide technical agroforestry training to natural resource professionals at existing professional meetings and conferences; and

(4) Utilize the power of markets by linking the production of profitable products to agroforestry system design.

c. ENGAGE GLOBALLY – Support the exchange of agroforestry technology between the United States and other countries, by taking action on these strategies:

(1) Initiate partnerships between the U.S. agroforestry community and the World Agroforestry Centre, as well as with other international agroforestry organizations, in order to advance global and domestic food security and economic well-being; and

(2) Create linkages between USDA agencies whose technical assistance, research, financial planning, and extension/outreach programs in agroforestry would enhance the USDA "Feed the Future" Global Food Security initiative and other food security projects.

**5. USDA POLICY FOR THE SCIENCE OF AGROFORESTRY**

**To advance the understanding of, and tools for, applying agroforestry, USDA will:**

a. PLAN – Identify, assess, and prioritize interagency agroforestry science and technology needs, opportunities, and investments, by taking action on these strategies:

(1) Form an interagency team to identify, assess, and prioritize agroforestry scientific and technology needs and outcomes to improve the quality, relevancy, and performance of end-user products;

(2) Catalog USDA agroforestry research activities and resources; and

(3) Incorporate agroforestry, where appropriate, into requests for proposals through existing USDA science and technology programs.

b. DISCOVER – Conduct interagency, multidisciplinary research to advance agroforestry science and technologies, by taking action on these strategies:

(1) Establish regional interagency, multidisciplinary teams to frame priority issues that can be addressed by agroforestry;

(2) Facilitate access to relevant data across participating agencies to support interagency, multidisciplinary, and cross-scale analysis; and

(3) Develop the knowledge and technologies to improve the application of agroforestry in:

   (a) Protecting air, water, and soil resources;

   (b) Building healthy and productive farms, ranches, woodlands, and communities;

   (c) Emerging environmental markets (e.g., carbon, water quality);

   (d) Creating diversity and building landscape level resiliency to climate change impacts;

   (e) Restoring ecological services across rural urban lands and communities;

   (f) Providing innovative and sustainable bioenergy production systems; and

   (g) Developing profitable and economically sustainable agroforestry-based systems that produce market goods.

(4) Develop knowledge and technologies to improve accounting of the benefits of agroforestry by:

   (a) Establishing measurement, inventorying, and monitoring protocols that more accurately reflect agroforestry plantings and their impacts;

   (b) Building the infrastructure to conduct lifecycle analyses of agroforestry practices/systems; and

   (c) Quantifying the net economic benefits from agroforestry applications for comparison with those from other management systems.

c. TRANSLATE – Move agroforestry innovations into products and services, by taking action on these strategies:

(1) Facilitate ongoing interactions with end-users throughout the technology development cycle;

(2) Evaluate the ways of learning by customers to improve application of agroforestry;

(3) Develop customized agroforestry products for targeted audiences and locations; and

(4) Conduct evidence-based syntheses to provide agroforestry planning and design guidelines to address the following priorities:

    (a) Providing multifunctional and multi-scale planning and design;

    (b) Addressing mitigation and adaptation to climate change;

    (c) Meeting the needs of small and limited resource landowners; and

    (d) Protecting and creating critical habitat for wildlife, aquatic species, and pollinators.

## 6. USDA POLICY FOR THE INTEGRATION OF AGROFORESTRY INTO AGENCY PROGRAMS

**To incorporate agroforestry into an all-lands approach to conservation and economic development, USDA will:**

a. INSTITUTIONALIZE – Incorporate agroforestry into USDA policies, programs, and activities, by taking action on these strategies:

(1) Develop a USDA agroforestry policy statement (this Departmental Regulation);

(2) All USDA agencies will take affirmative steps to advance the science, practice, and application of agroforestry by including the term, as appropriate, in all internal and external agency communications (e.g., correspondence, talking points, web pages, and program solicitations to USDA customers for grant proposals and/or applications for financial assistance). Two definitions are recommended for use, depending on the audience:

    (a) GENERAL: *Agroforestry* is a unique land management approach that intentionally blends agriculture and forestry to enhance productivity, profitability, and environmental stewardship; or

    (b) TECHNICAL: *Agroforestry* means the intentional integration of trees and/or shrubs into crop and/or animal production systems to create economic, environmental, and social benefits.

(3) Establish an Agroforestry Executive Steering Committee that will direct implementation of the *Framework*;

(4) Develop and adopt a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing the Committee and establishing a framework of cooperation to advance the science, practice, and application of agroforestry by appropriate USDA mission areas/agencies and cooperators;

(5) Develop an implementation plan for the *Framework,* including a reporting system to monitor progress;

(6) Report annually to the Secretary of Agriculture, including a review of USDA financial commitments to agroforestry, accomplishments, and outcomes; and

(7) Include agroforestry as a strategy to achieve the goals of Statewide Assessments and Strategies for Forest Resources, State Wildlife Action Plans, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Unified Watershed Assessments, NRCS Rapid Watershed Assessments, and other similar assessments and strategies.

b. ASSESS PERFORMANCE – Account for and monitor agroforestry impacts and applications, by taking action on these strategies:

(1) Assess and report on the environmental, economic, and social impacts of agroforestry;

(2)  Work within USDA to establish a comprehensive national inventory of on-the-ground applications of agroforestry practices/systems or include in existing inventory structures (e.g., Forest Inventory and Analysis or the Natural Resources Inventory);

(3) Work with the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service to utilize the Census of Agriculture to monitor the application of agroforestry practices/ systems by agricultural producers;

(4) Utilize the National Woodland Owners Survey to monitor the application of agroforestry practices/systems by nonindustrial private forest landowners; and

(5) Track agroforestry technologies applied by communities.

c. COMMUNICATE RESULTS – Promote awareness and appreciation of agroforestry, by taking action on these strategies:

(1) Communicate the economic, environmental, and social benefits of agroforestry to the full spectrum of land users, Tribes, communities (urban to rural), minority landowners/limited-resource producers, natural resource professionals, and other stakeholders;

(2) Advance agroforestry as a means to support sustainable agricultural systems, including increased resilience to the impacts of climate change (e.g., drought, floods);

(3) Foster public-private partnerships that increase understanding, acceptance, and increased application of agroforestry;

(4) Publicize and increase use of demonstration sites that increase acceptance and understanding of agroforestry;

(5) Utilize USDA newsletters, market bulletins, and other publications to highlight the practice of agroforestry and its contribution to improving and diversifying agricultural production, enhancing environmental and economic resiliency, building vibrant communities, and conserving private working lands; and

(6) Create feedback mechanisms for stakeholders to the Committee.

## 7. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Each of the six agencies and RD mission area, which signed the charter, has the responsibility to nominate a senior level representative that will be an active Committee member.

b. Each Under Secretary (Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services; Marketing and Regulatory Programs; Natural Resources and Environment; Research, Education, and Economics; and Rural Development) will ensure that the nominated Committee member(s):

(1)     Serves as an agroforestry advocate; and

(2)     Identifies resources within their agency to achieve Committee priorities.

c. All Under Secretaries, including those not represented on the Committee, have the responsibility to incorporate agroforestry, as appropriate, into their agency strategic plans.

d. The Committee has the responsibility to develop an implementation plan to achieve the *Framework* Goals.

e. The Secretary has the responsibility to incorporate agroforestry, as appropriate, into the next USDA strategic plan.

-END-